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Colonial Noir: Diseasing the City

To what extent did the colonial city anticipate the global capitalist megacity of the future in its incorporation of hybridized styles and racial diversity? This paper seeks to address this critical issue by relating cyberpunk cityscapes of late twentieth-century film with the urban imaginaries of 'colonial' noir. Beginning with a discussion of Jean-Paul Sartre's evocation of New York as "a colonial city and camping ground", the paper shows, firstly, how a technology-permeated hyper-reality is invariably construed as a pathological condition, reflected, symptomatically, in fragmentation and ephemerality. And, secondly, how the etiology of this 'colonial' disease is located in the metropolitan centres and "malevolent space" (Sartre) of 'classic' noir.